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BACKGROUNDER 1-0286 MARCH 3, 1976
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MOSCOW AND A EUROPEAN COMMUNIST CONFERENCE

ANNCR:

THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY'S TWENTY-FIFTH CONGRESS IN MOSCOW IS REVEALING DIFFERENCES OF DOCTRINE THAT HAVE DELAYED A EUROPEAN COMMUNIST CONGRESS. FOR A BACKGROUND REPORT HERE IS VOA CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS IN MOSCOW.

VOICE:

IN ONE SENSE, THE SOVIET PARTY CONGRESS HAS TURNED INTO A FORUM WHERE EVERYONE CAN SEE JUST WHAT THE PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN IN PLANNING THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST CONFERENCE. THAT CONFERENCE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN HELD LAST YEAR, BUT DISPUTES OVER COMMUNIST DOCTRINE HAVE FORCED CONTINUING REVISIONS OF A PROPOSED CONFERENCE DOCUMENT. THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, JUDGING FROM GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV'S SPEECH IN THE KREMLIN HERE, IS INSISTING ON FAR MORE UNITY AMONG EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS AND FAR MORE LOYALTY TO SOVIET DOCTRINE THAN SOME MAJOR EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT.

THE KEY PHRASE, PRESUMABLY THE ONE THAT MOSCOW WANTS WRITTEN INTO A EUROPEAN CONFERENCE DOCUMENT IS "INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIANISM." THIS IS UNDERSTOOD HERE IN TWO WAYS. FIRST, AS ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET LEADERSHIP IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND SECOND, AS WILLINGNESS TO DENOUNCE MAOISM AND ANY OTHER CRITICS OF THE SOVIET UNION THAT ARE COLLECTIVELY GROUPED AS ANTI-SOVIET FORCES. THE MAIN DISSENTERS HERE HAD BEEN THE ITALIAN, FRENCH, BRITISH, YUGOSLAV AND ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES.

SPEECHES AT THE SOVIET CONGRESS SEEMED OBVIOUSLY TO REFLECT THE INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE CAUSED DIFFICULTIES IN PLANNING THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST GATHERING. JUDGING FROM THEIR REMARKS THESE DISSENTING PARTIES WANT SEVERAL POINTS MADE IN A EUROPEAN DOCUMENT. FIRST, THAT EVERY PARTY IS INDEPENDENT. SECOND, THAT EACH HAS THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ITS OWN NATIONAL POLICIES AND THIRD -- THIS POINT TAKEN UP CHIEFLY BY THE FRENCH AND BRITISH PARTIES -- THAT COMMUNISTS MUST BE ON RECORD AS SUPPORTING THE FULL RANGE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES. THE THIRD POINT REFLECTS DIRECTLY ON THE SOVIET UNION AND IS ONE REASON THAT FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER, GEORGES MARCHAIS, REFUSED TO ATTEND THIS SOVIET PARTY CONGRESS. THE OTHER POINTS -- THE STRESS ON INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL POLICIES -- ARE NOT WELCOMED BY THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP; IT HAS OPENLY CRITICIZED BOTH. BUT IT IS APPARENT HERE THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP IS TRYING TO BRIDGE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOVIET DOCTRINE AND EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS IF ONLY TO SALVAGE THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST CONFERENCE.

ALTHOUGH THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN AVOIDED HERE PUBLICLY MOSCOW SEEMS COMMITTED TO STAGING THAT GATHERING. SOVIET PARTY LEADER LEONID BREZHNEV MET WITH ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY SECRETARY ENRICO BERLINGUER EARLIER THIS WEEK IN AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO SHOW THAT THE ITALIAN AND SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTIES, DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES, ALSO HAVE COMMON INTERESTS. THE MEETING WAS PUBLICIZED BY THE SOVIET OFFICIAL PRESS AND TELEVISION ALONG WITH A JOINT STATEMENT THAT DID INCLUDE -- APPARENTLY AT THE INSISTENCE OF MISTER BERLINGUER -- A PHRASE ON INDEPENDENCE.

THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP PRESUMABLY WAS AWARE THAT TO INVITE THE ITALIAN, FRENCH, BRITISH, YUGOSLAV AND ROMANIAN PARTIES TO THE SOVIET CONGRESS WAS ALSO TO INVITE THE RATHER OPEN DISPLAY OF DIFFERENCES. BUT FOR THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, THE PROBLEM MAY BE SIMPLY THAT THERE IS NO CHOICE SO LONG AS THE KREMLIN REMAINS COMMITTED TO A EUROPEAN COMMUNIST CONGRESS.

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